Fallen leaves do not return, is the heart at peace? - Temple of Literature - World Wide Blog - World Wide Reader Network (computer version)

Falling leaves return to the roots is the aesthetics of belonging in Confucian poetry. For thousands of years, countless wanderers have been entrusted by the cultural motto of the ancient national saying "parents are here, not far away". No matter how high they sit and how far and how long they have walked, even if they die in a foreign country, they also require their ashes to return to their homeland, that is, return to where they were born. The place called "root".

Immortal Chinese psalms or a model of morality?

Talking about the return of fallen leaves, there is a past story worth recalling decades ago. My supervising professor, an Englishman who moved to the United States, talked to me about the colonial culture of the West. He was a little confused. He was surprised that the traditional Chinese would eventually return to their homeland, but now everything had changed. He lamented the awakening of the Chinese and the changes of the times. Nowadays, millions of overseas Chinese have been "rebellious" - taking root and blooming everywhere. In this tension between globalization and national identity, the so-called "return to the root" is no longer the end of fate, but more like an untimely folk shadow.

If "falling leaves return to the root" used to be a cultural belief, then "root" often points to a clan network - the land under the temple plaque, the set of surname ethics, the family-first survival logic and the

unforgettable ancestral precepts. However, today's overseas Chinese have long moved away from this system - not betrayal, but disintegrated.

The former clan society has been maintained for more than a thousand years by the trinity of "ancestral hall + genealogy + land". Today, the "ancestral hall" has become a tourist attraction, "genealogy" has become the object of thesis research, and the "land" has been crushed by the "transformation of urban villages" and "collective requisition". The elimination of the clan is not a Western conspiracy, but an intrinsic price of the Chinese revolution or the modernization process - when GDP replaces the ancestral teachings as the only criterion, the fate of the clan will no longer have a place to stand.

My grandfather and parents have completed their education with the support of the clan. I can only remember the first eight words of the family's "ancestral precept": "Songshan Science, Zhejiang Water Culture". This was not taught by parents, but occasionally heard the casual nagging of a relative and elder. She was the least educated in that generation, but I wrote down her advice. The "rebellion" of my parents has set an example. My Chinese name has been canceled, and I don't care about the order of the next generation. And I was not born in my hometown, and even where I grew up, I can be regarded as wandering around the world. As a result of the "revolution", we collectively lost our home and family, leaving only an illusory name - the motherland.

The extinction of the clan did not begin today. In the Qing Dynasty, Huang Zongxi had criticized the clamp of individual freedom by the patriarchal system in "The original king": "The family is a small country, and the father is the small king". He had already seen the miniature tyranny of clan power; Liang Qichao even put forward the concept of "citizens" in the "New People's Theory", intending to break the Confucian tradition of "the son does not speak the clan". On the one hand, Li Hongzhang, as a representative figure of the clan, once presided over the industrialization

and transformation of the family, and on the other hand, he played the agent of modern state governance in the foreign affairs movement. His personality and government are the living fossil of the family's decline.

Today's China is no longer Huang Zongxi's Taoism, Liang Qichao's ideal, and Li Hongzhang's compromise, but a variant of a hybrid modern country - not only requires you to be loyal to the "motherland narrative", but also refuses to refuse you to inherit the "clan feelings". Overseas Chinese are just a group of people who first saw this conflict clearly and made rational choices. .

A generation of immigrants: escape is not betrayal, but rationality

One spring of the last century, not far from the 89 Incident, I flew from Hong Kong to Los Angeles with a visa. At the time of parting, relatives and friends said, "Remember to return the roots in the future!" Even the American female visa officer in Guangzhou added before leaving: "Please remember to tell me your research situation when you come back." He had no time to think about the cultural burden behind these words. He only knew that the purpose of this trip was by no means "gilding", let alone "overseas Chinese patriotic project", but a silent escape. Although, I never want to say these two words.

Escape is not a betrayal, but a rational choice. When we face our home country, it is no longer a moral social community, but a symbolic machine that swallows up objections with a "unified caliber". In the end, it is no longer belonging, but self-binding. And "rationality" is no longer the kind of self-cultivation in the way of Confucius and Meng, but the kind of judgment of betting on the future fate on a visa at the airport.

I don't want to live in a scam for a lifetime. I can't change it, but God gave me the choice of freedom. I am a bird who escaped from the cage by chance. My intuition tells me that life has become meaningful since then.

The dilemma of the second generation: new roots, old wounds, double marginal people

Looking at today's "ABC", "BBC" or "CBC" generation (second-generation Chinese), they stumble between skin pigment and English tone. It is not fully accepted by Western society, nor can it understand the obsession of the ancestors. This generation often recognizes the word "China" not from history books, but from the "Chinese Cultural Challenge" on TikTok.

They have a painful "double marginality": in the West, they are "model ethnic minorities", a instrumental label with implicit discrimination; in China, they are "yellow-skinned outsiders who sell nationality at a lwhes a gax", and are suspected and scrutinized. For them, "returning to the root" is a cultural responsibility rather than a spiritual call - and responsibility often has nothing to do with belonging.

My descendants don't understand what I type in front of the keyboard: who should I write to? Haven't you already left that land? No, I didn't write to my hometown, and I don't care about your confusion. I just want the fallen leaves to continue to float, leaving a little echo for the living conscience.

The metaphor of history: Who set the original meaning of the fallen leaves?

The myth of "returning to the root" has a long history in Chinese culture, which originated from the worship of the ancestral land in the agricultural era. But is this cultural structure universal? It is worth questioning. In the second year of going abroad, I returned to China to save my relatives. An old man in his 90s looked at me with envy at the banquet and suddenly shouted at me, "Bo Jinshan!" I shook my head vigorously, but he replied, "That's you!" Can you experience his out-of-string sound?

In fact, there are many people in Chinese history who do not return to their roots. Poets in exile in the Tang Dynasty, refugees from Zhuji Lane in Guangdong, squires who fled at the end of the Ming Dynasty, and revolutionaries who left the Soviet Union during the Republic of China - they may have been buried in foreign lands, but they have not been defined by history as "betraying their ancestors and forgetting their original". Why do "overseas Chinese" today have to bear the original sin of "cultural exile"? Perhaps, "returning to the root" has long become a moral lasso or kidnapping with political connotations, rather than a spiritual return psalm.

Bai Juyi's poem in the Tang Dynasty wrote: "A peaceful heart and body are better to return to, and my hometown can be alone in Chang'an", "I was born without a hometown, and peace of mind is a home". In the Song Dynasty, Su Shi even wrote the eternal song "This place of peace is my hometown".

New pattern: decoupling globalization and identity

Today's pattern is no longer the one-way saying of "the motherland is strong and overseas is returned". Sino-American games, speech censorship, passport policy, technical decoupling... All kinds of practical problems force overseas Chinese to redefine their identity: citizens, not "compatriots"; residents, not "faraway wanderers". But I consider myself a citizen of the world and can take out my passport to verify my identity.

This is not only a political choice, but also a psychological and identity self-reconstruction. The most dangerous trap in human history is the obsession of binding identity with the place of birth - the rooting person, which is the cultural echo of this trap.

When it comes to binding and traps, there is no essential difference from fraud and robbery. Look at the "overseas children" who returned to the root in the 1950s, how many people can go to the ground for peace?

Home is no longer a geographical concept, but a psychological puzzle.

"ROOT" USED TO BE A METAPHOR FOR THE LAND - THE FIELD NEXT TO THE ANCESTRAL GRAVE CARRIED MEMORY, DEBT AND TABOO. Nowadays, land is just a resource that has been demolished and monetized - "expropriated area of xx mu", which can destroy a hundred years of hometown in one sentence.

We refuse to "return to the root", not to betay our ancestors, but to return to a place where even our ancestors did not know us. When there is only a real estate template of "unified planning" left in the village, the ancestral house only survives in the "TikTok Ruins Exploration". We are just self-exiled in a "cultural wasteland", not exiled.

Home is no longer "that village" or "that street", but "the puzzle in memory". You can find the fragment of "home" at the weekend farmers' market in California, or you can make up another piece in the Swedish immigrant vegetable market. Or simply in your backyard to realize your children's playground. We are indeed not "drifting", but reconstructing.

The graveyard of grandparents' ashes is located at the foot of the beautiful mountain. Parents can no longer let his (her) return to the roots of their bodies, or "bury them in the ground". After hearing so many rumors, no one can know the source of the ashes. Later people can only force themselves to believe that it is the destination of the soul. If you accidentally forget to pay the management fee, who knows where the ashes will go?

The home of the maternal grandparents is all family members. The clans have been buried, but they dare not erect tombstones. It can be preserved to this day, and the process is full of happiness and tears, which is difficult to describe.

No one wants to guess what will happen decades later: this is a generation of moral kidnapping, and you and my ancestral position are destined to be swept into the "garbage heap of history". The process is simple and rough, just a matter of a thought.

Mark of current affairs: the era of broken chain after the zero policy

The zero policy in 2022 is a psychological watershed. A large number of overseas Chinese were completely cut off from the "root" in the cancellation of flights, the collapse of nucleic acid jams and health code technology. This policy not only makes people question the humanistic care of the "state", but also makes many people realize that the so-called "returning to the root" is just a temporary tolerance of your behavior by the administrative system, not the recognition of the spiritual home.

The sudden termination of the oath-to-end zero, is it a call or curiosity? I actually returned to the place where I was born for the first time. For half a century, my mother kept nagging me about the place I left when I was two years old. But what I saw was a completely strange place. Baiye is depressed, mobile phones can't connect to the external network, and there are always policemen standing at the subway station... Looking up, it was the waving portrait and the slogan of what values. Most of the people in this coastal city are busy fleeing, repeating my trajectory for half a century.

From the online trend of "locking up 2.0" to "international students voting for non-humanity", from "surrogacy punishment" to "passport confiscation order", various examples indicate that "Chinese roots" have become a political mark, not a call for family affection. "Return" has become "censorship", which is forced, not yearning.

Why don't you come back? Because it has taken root.

I have found a place of peace of mind, the dreams of many Chinese

descendants for thousands of years.

Not every fallen leaf has to take root. Some fallen leaves have turned into new soil in the air. On this land, we are no longer travelers, but builders; no longer cultural porters, but value participants.

So, the fallen leaves don't return to the roots? Because the root is not necessarily in the hometown, it can also be in peace of mind. If there is a real root mark, she will definitely show that: don't bow to the ignorant or distorted culture - this is the most precious heritage and life values left to me by my ancestors and parents.

Leave these words and let them float in the world of the Internet like fallen leaves:

What is the root? The root is a metaphor for power, not an outlet for nostalgia:

I don't return to the roots. It's not that I don't love the family, but that the family no longer exists, because the roots have lost their soil and the leaves have given birth to their ambition;

Is the extinction of the clan the price of revolution or the betrayal of civilization?

Land is no longer belonging, but a traded label;

Homeland is not a memory, but a mirror of questioning identity.
Homeland should not bind thoughts, and blood relationship should not lock expression.
I was not exiled, but chose to stare more clearly. I'm not a wanderer, I'm a

bystander. I am not a messenger from a foreign country, but a recorder in the rift;

I am not willing to just stand on the roof of Zijin City and watch the world. Her wonderfulness and beauty are at my feet. Why do I have to sit in the digital prison and watch the sky?

History is not the background, but the sharpest tool for criticizing reality; writing is not a proof of belonging, but a testimony of existence; culture is not a flag, but a dictionary that has been repeatedly retranslated.

You think you are looking at China overseas, but in fact you are drifting under the eyes of China;

The so-called "root" is no longer surrounded by growing soil and has long been rotted into ashes. More often than not, it is just a "classified" that is easy to manage. In the past, it was a portable household registration, but now it is a real-name online certificate; the motherland is clearly illusory, but it always has to confirm my existence?

But my heart flies freely between heaven and earth. I want to be an evergreen tree, blooming and fruiting for many years, accompanying my family until the end of life.